IMMUNIZATION INFORMATION

Hepatitis A Vaccine

What is hepatitis A?

- Hepatitis A is an infection of the liver caused by the hepatitis A virus.
- It is spread when germs from the feces (poop) of an infected person get into the mouth of another person. It can also be spread when someone eats or drinks contaminated food or water.
- It can cause fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and yellow skin and eyes (jaundice).
- Infection without symptoms is very common in infants and young children.
- The illness may last several weeks. Most people recover completely.

What is the hepatitis A vaccine?

- The hepatitis A vaccine contains whole hepatitis A virus that has been inactivated. The virus is not active and it can't make you sick. This vaccine will help your immune system recognize and fight the hepatitis A virus if you are exposed to it in the future.
- People need two doses of hepatitis A vaccine to be fully protected. The second dose is given 6–12 months after the first dose.
- Booster doses are not necessary.

Who should get the hepatitis A vaccine?

- The hepatitis A vaccine is not part of the Nova Scotia Routine Immunization Schedules for Children, Youth & Adults.
- People who are at high risk of getting hepatitis A should consider getting the vaccine, including:
  - » People with chronic liver disease
  - » Two-spirited people
  - » Men who have sex with men
  - » Transgender people
  - » Individuals with high-risk sexual practices
  - » People living with HIV
  - » People with substance use issues
  - » Children living with a person at high-risk of getting hepatitis A.

Who should NOT receive the hepatitis A vaccine?

- People who have had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose or any component of hepatitis A vaccine.
- People who are sick or have a fever (temperature of 38.5°C/101.3°F or greater).

Please read other side.

IMMUNIZATION AFTERCARE

Hepatitis A Vaccine

People should stay in the clinic for at least 15 minutes after receiving any type of immunization to monitor possible reaction. As with any vaccine there is a slight possibility that a more serious reaction could occur.

What are the possible side effects of the hepatitis A vaccine?

- As with any other vaccine, the most common side effects are soreness, redness, or swelling at the injection site.
- Less common side effects include a slight fever, headache, generally feeling unwell, or gastrointestinal symptoms.

As fever may occur, make sure you have acetaminophen or ibuprofen at home. Follow the instructions that come with the product. Talk to your healthcare provider before using either of these medications as they are not recommended for people with certain medical conditions.

Call your healthcare provider if:

- A fever lasts longer than 24 hours.
- A fever is 38.5°C (101.3°F) or higher.
- A fever doesn't come down after acetaminophen or ibuprofen are taken.
- Other illness or symptoms occur.

Questions?

If you have any questions about hepatitis A or the hepatitis A vaccine, please call your local Public Health office (see list of offices here: www.nshealth.ca/public-health) or your healthcare provider.

For more information on immunization, please visit the following websites:

Nova Scotia Health Public Health
www.nshealth.ca/immunizations

Immunize Canada
immunize.ca

Public Health Agency of Canada
www.canada.ca/public-health

Canadian Paediatric Society
cps.ca

811
811.novascotia.ca

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